Pontic Greek

Pontic Greek (Greek: Ποντιακή διάλεκτος, romanized: *Pontiakí diálektos*; Pontic Greek: Ποντιακόν λαλίαν, romanized: *Pontiakón lalían*) is a Greek dialect originally spoken in the Pontus area on the southern shores of the Black Sea, northeastern Anatolia, the Eastern Turkish/Caucasus province of Kars, southern Georgia and today mainly in northern Greece. Its speakers are referred to as Pontic Greeks or Pontian Greeks.

The linguistic lineage of Pontic Greek stems from Ionic Greek via Koine and Byzantine Greek, and contains influences from Georgian, Russian, Turkish and Armenian.

Pontic Greek is an endangered Indo-European language spoken by about 778,000 people worldwide.[1] However, only 200,000–300,000 are considered active speakers.[3] Although it is mainly spoken in Northern Greece, it is also spoken in Turkey, Russia, Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan and by the Pontic diaspora. The language was brought to Greece in the 1920s after the population exchange between the Christian Pontic Greeks and the Turkish Muslims from their homelands during the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. However, it is still spoken in pockets of the Pontus today, mostly by Pontic Greek Muslims in the eastern districts of Trabzon Province. Pontic Greek is considered a dialect of modern Greek, although reportedly, the speakers of each do not fully understand each other.[4] It is primarily written in the Greek script, while in Turkey and Ukraine the Latin script is used more frequently.

Pontic Greek	
πontιακά, *pontiaká*, понтиακά	
Region	originally the Pontus on the Black Sea coast; Russia, Georgia, and Turkey
Native speakers	778,000 (2009-2015)[1]
Language family	Indo-European ▪ Greek 　▪ Attic–Ionic 　　▪ **Pontic Greek**
Writing system	Greek; Latin; Cyrillic
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`pnt`
Glottolog	`pont1253` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/pont1253)[2]
Linguasphere	`56-AAA-aj`

Contents

Classification

Pontic Greek is classified as an <u>Indo-European</u>, <u>Greek language</u> of the <u>Attic</u>-<u>Ionic</u> branch.[1]

Name

Historically the speakers of Pontic Greek called it *Romeyka* (or *Romeika*, <u>Greek</u>: Ρωμαίικα), which, in a more general sense, is also a historical and colloquial term for Modern Greek as a whole. The term "Pontic" originated in scholarly usage, but it has been adopted as a mark of identity by Pontic Greeks living in Greece.[5]

Similarly, in <u>Turkish</u>, the language is called *Rumca* (pronounced [ˈɾumd͡ʒa]), derived from the Turkish word *Rum*, denoting ethnic Greeks living in Turkey in general; the term also includes other Greek speakers in Turkey such as those from <u>Istanbul</u> or <u>Imbros</u> (Gökçeada) who speak a language close to <u>Standard Modern Greek</u>.[6]

Today's Pontic speakers living in Turkey call their language *Romeyka, Rumca* or *Rumcika*.[6]

History

Similar to most modern Greek dialects, Pontic Greek is mainly derived from Koine Greek, which was spoken in the <u>Hellenistic</u> and <u>Roman</u> times between the 4th century BC and the 4th century AD. Following the <u>Seljuk invasion of Asia Minor</u> during the 11th century AD, Pontus became isolated from many of the regions of the Byzantine Empire.[7] The Pontians remained somewhat isolated from the mainland Greeks, causing Pontic Greek to develop separately and distinctly from the rest of the mainland Greek.[8] However, the language has also been influenced by the nearby Persian, <u>Caucasian</u> and Turkish languages.

Dialects

Greek linguist <u>Manolis Triantafyllidis</u> has divided the Pontic of Turkey into two groups:

- the Western group (*Oinountiac* or *Niotika*) around <u>Oenoe</u> (Turkish *Ünye*);
- the Eastern group, which is again subdivided into:
    - the coastal subgroup (*Trapezountiac*) around <u>Trebizond</u> (Ancient Greek *Trapezous*) and
    - the inland subgroup (*Chaldiot*) in <u>Chaldia</u> (around <u>Argyroupolis</u> [Gümüşhane] and Kanin in Pontic), its vicinity (<u>Kelkit</u>, <u>Baibourt</u>, etc.), and around <u>Kotyora</u> (Ordu).

Speakers of Chaldiot were the most numerous. In phonology, some varieties of Pontic are reported to demonstrate vowel harmony, a well-known feature of Turkish (Mirambel 1965).

Outside Turkey one can distinguish:

- the Northern group (*Mariupol Greek* or *Rumeíka*), originally spoken in Crimea, but now principally in Mariupol, where the majority of Crimean Pontic Greeks of the Rumaiic subgroup now live. Other Pontic Greeks speak Crimean Tatar as their mother tongue, and are classified as "Urums". There are approximately half a dozen dialects of Crimean (Mariupolitan) Pontic Greek spoken.
    - Soviet Rumaiic, a Soviet variant of the Pontic Greek language spoken by the Pontic Greek population of the Soviet Union.

Ophitic

The inhabitants of the Of valley who had converted to Islam in the 17th century remained in Turkey and have partly retained the Pontic language until today.[9][10][11][12] Their dialect, which forms part of the Trapezountiac subgroup, is called "Ophitic" by linguists, but speakers generally call it *Romeyka*. As few as 5,000 people are reported to speak it.[13][14] There are however estimates that show the real number of the speakers as considerably higher.[6] Speakers of Ophitic/Romeyka are concentrated in the eastern districts of Trabzon province: Çaykara (Katohor), Dernekpazarı (Kondu), Sürmene (Sourmena) and Köprübaşı (Göneşera). Although less widespread, it is still spoken in some remote villages of the Of district itself. It is also spoken in the western İkizdere (Dipotamos) district of Rize province. Historically the dialect was spoken in a wider area, stretching further east to the port town of Athina (Pazar).

Ophitic has retained the infinitive, which is present in Ancient Greek but has been lost in other variants of Modern Greek; it has therefore been characterized as "archaic" or conservative (even in relation to other Pontic dialects) and as the living language that is closest to Ancient Greek.[13][14]

A very similar dialect is spoken by descendants of Christians from the Of valley (especially from Kondu) now living in Greece in the village of Nea Trapezounta, Pieria, Central Macedonia, with about 400 speakers.[15][16][17]

Geographic distribution

Though Pontic was originally spoken on the southern shores of the Black Sea, from the 18th and 19th century and on substantial numbers migrated into the northern and eastern shores, into the Russian Empire. Pontic is still spoken by large numbers of people in Ukraine, mainly in Mariupol, but also in other parts of Ukraine such as the Odessa and Donetsk region, in Russia (around Stavropol) and Georgia. The language enjoyed some use as a literary medium in the 1930s, including a school grammar (Topkharas 1998 [1932]).

After the massacres of the 1910s, the majority of speakers remaining in Asia Minor were subject to the Treaty of Lausanne population exchange, and were resettled in Greece (mainly northern Greece). A second wave of migration occurred in the early 1990s, this time from countries of the former Soviet Union.[18]

In Greece, Pontic is now many times used only emblematically rather than as a medium of communication due to the mixing of Pontic and other Greeks.

- Greece: 400,000 speakers, mostly in Macedonia (East, Central and West) and in Attica[19]
- Turkey: Unknown (certainly more than 5,000), mostly in eastern Black Sea Region and in Istanbul[20][19][21]

- Of-dialectical region:
    - Of: multiple villages
    - Çaykara: (24-70 villages)
    - Dernekpazarı: (13 villages)
    - Köprübaşı: (5 villages)
    - Sürmene: (31 villages)
    - Rize: (21 villages, mostly in İkizdere district)
- To the west of Trabzon:
    - Maçka: A handful of villages, settled from the Of-Çaykara region
    - Tonya: (17 villages)
    - Beşikdüzü: 1 village
    - Giresun: (3 villages in Bulancak district)
    - Gümüşhane: Sparsely in Torul-ardasa, Yağlıdere-kromni, Dumanlı
- Caucasus region
    - Kars: Multiple villages and provincial capital.

Official status

Greece

In Greece, Pontic has no official status, like all other Greek dialects.

Soviet Union

Historically, Pontic Greek was the *de facto* language of the Greek minority in the USSR, although in the Πανσυνδεσμιακή Σύσκεψη (*Pansyndesmiakí Sýskepsi*, All-Union Conference) of 1926, organised by the Greek-Soviet intelligentsia, it was decided that Demotic should be the official language of the community.[22]

Later revival of Greek identity in the Soviet Union and post-Communist Russia saw a renewed division on the issue of Rumaiic versus Demotic. A new attempt to preserve a sense of ethnic Rumaiic identity started in the mid-1980s. The Ukrainian scholar Andriy Biletsky created a new Slavonic alphabet, but though a number of writers and poets make use of this alphabet, the population of the region rarely uses it.[23]

Culture

The language has a rich oral tradition and folklore and Pontic songs are particularly popular in Greece. There is also some limited production of modern literature in Pontic, including poetry collections (among the most renowned writers is Kostas Diamantidis), novels, and translated Asterix comic albums.[24] The youth often speak standard Greek as their first language. The use of Pontic has been maintained more by speakers in North America than it has in Greece.[1]

Alphabets

Pontic, in Greece, is written in the Greek alphabet, with diacritics: ʃ̌ ζ̌ ξ̌ ψ̌ for /ʃ ʒ kʃ pʃ/, ᾶ ö for [æ ø] (phonological /ia io/). Pontic, in Turkey, is written in the Latin alphabet following Turkish conventions. In Russia, it is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. In early Soviet times, Pontic was written in the Greek alphabet phonetically, as shown below, using digraphs instead of diacritics; [æ ø] were written out as ια, ιο.

Greek alphabet	Turkish alphabet	Cyrillic alphabet	IPA	Example
A α	A a	A a	[ä]	ρομεικ**α**, romeyik**a**, ромейик**а**
B β	V v	В в	[v]	κατι**β**ενο, kati**v**eno, кати**в**ено
Γ γ	Ğ ğ	Г г	[ɣ] [j]	**γ**ανεβο, **ğ**anevo, **г**анево
Δ δ	DH dh	Д д	[ð]	**δ**οντι, **dh**onti, **д**онти
E ε	E e	E e	[e̞]	**ε**γαπεσα, **e**ğapesa, **е**гапеса
Z ζ	Z z	З з	[z]	**ζ**αντος, **z**antos, **з**антос
ZZ ζζ	J j	Ж ж	[ʒ]	πυρ**ζζ**υας, bur**j**uvas, бур**ж**уас
Θ θ	TH th	С с, Ф ф, Т т	[θ]	**θ**εκο, **th**eko, **т**еко
I ι	İ i	И и	[i]	τοσ**π**ιτοπον, tos**p**itopon, тосп**и**топон
K κ	K k	К к	[k]	**κ**αλατζεμαν, **k**alaceman, **к**алачеман
Λ λ	L l	Л л	[l]	**λ**αλια, **l**alia, **л**алиа
M μ	M m	М м	[m]	**μ**ανα, **m**ana, **м**ана
N ν	N n	Н н	[n]	ολιγο**ν**, oliğo**n**, олиго**н**
O o	O o	O o	[o̞]	τεμετερ**ο**ν, temeter**o**n, теметер**о**н
Π π	P p	П п	[p]	εγα**π**εσα, eğa**p**esa, ега**п**еса
P ρ	R r	Р р	[ɾ]	**ρ**ομεικα, **r**omeyika, **р**омейка
Σ ς	S s	С с	[s]	καλατζεπ**ς**ον, kalacep**s**on, калачеп**с**он
ΣΣ ςς	Ş ş	Ш ш	[ʃ]	**ςς**ερι, **ş**eri, **ш**ери
T τ	T t	Т т	[t]	νοσ**τ**ιμεσα, nos**t**imesa, нос**т**имеса
TZ τζ	C c	Ц ц	[d͡ʒ]	καλα**τζ**εμαν, kala**c**eman, кала**ц**еман
ΤΣ τς	Ç ç	Ч ч	[t͡ʃ]	μανι**τς**α, mani**ç**a, мани**ч**а
Y υ	U u	У у	[u]	ν**υ**ς, n**u**s, н**у**с
Φ φ	F f	Ф ф	[f]	εμορ**φ**α, emor**f**a, эмор**фа**
X χ	H, KH (sert H)	Х х	[x]	**χ**ασον, **h**ason, **х**асон

Archaisms

The following are features of Pontic Greek which have been retained from early forms of Greek, in contrast to the developments of Modern Greek.

Phonology

- Preservation of the ancient pronunciation of 'η' as 'ε' (κέπιν = κήπιον, κλέφτες = κλέπτης, συνέλικος = συνήλικος, νύφε = νύ(μ)φη, έγκα = ἤνεγκον, έτον = ἦτον, έκουσα = ἤκουσα etc.).
- Preservation of the ancient pronunciation 'ω' as 'o' where Koine Greek received it as 'ου' (ζωμίν = ζουμί, καρβώνι, ρωθώνι etc.).
- Preservation of the Ionic consonant pair 'σπ' instead of Koine 'σφ' (σποντύλιν, σπίγγω, σπιντόνα).

Declension of nouns and adjectives

- Preservation of the ancient nominative suffix -ν in neuter diminutive nouns from Ancient Greek '-íov' (παιδίον, χωρίον; Pontic παιδίν, χωρίν).
- Preservation of the termination of feminine compound adjectives in -ος (η άλαλος, η άνοστος, η έμορφος).
- The declension of masculine nouns from singular, nominative termination '-ον' to genitive '-ονος' (ο νέον → τη νέονος, ο πάππον → τη πάππονος, ο λύκον → τη λύκονος, ο Τούρκον → τη Τούρκονος etc.).
- The ancient accenting of nouns in vocative form: άδελφε, Νίκολα, Μάρια.

Conjugation of verbs

- The second aorist form in -ον (ανάμνον, μείνον, κόψον, πίσον, ράψον, σβήσον).
- The middle voice verb termination in -ούμαι (ανακατούμαι, σκοτούμαι, στεφανούμαι).
- The passive voice aorist termination in -θα (anc. -θην): εγαπέθα, εκοιμέθα, εστάθα etc.
- The imperative form of passive aorist in -θετε (anc -θητι): εγαπέθετε, εκοιμέθετε, εστάθετε.
- The sporadic use of infinitives (εποθανείναι, μαθείναι, κόψ'ναι, ράψ'ναι, χαρίσ'ναι, αγαπέθειν, κοιμεθείν).
- Pontic *en* ("is") from Koine idiomatic form *enesti* (standard Ancient Greek *esti*), compare the Biblical form *eni* ("there is"), Modern Greek *ine* (είναι)

Lexicology

- The sporadic use of 'ας' in the place of 'να': δός με ας τρόω.
- Pontic *temeteron* ("ours") from Ancient Greek *ton hemeteron* in contrast to Modern Greek *ton […] mas*.

Comparison with Ancient Greek

1. Attachment of the /e/ sound to the ancient infinitive suffix –εῖν, -ειν (in Trapezountiac Pontic)

PONTIC	ANCIENT
ειπείνε	εἰπεῖν
παθείνε	παθεῖν
αποθανείνε	ἀποθανεῖν
πιείνε	

	πιεῖν
ειδείνε	εἰδεῖν
φυείνε	φυγεῖν
ευρείνε	εὑρεῖν
καμείνε	καμεῖν
φαείνε	φαγεῖν
μαθείνε	μαθεῖν
ερθέανε	ἐλθεῖν
μενείνε	μένειν

2. Preservation of the Ancient infinitive suffix -ῆναι

PONTIC	ANCIENT
ανεβήναι	ἀναβῆναι
κατεβήναι	καταβῆναι
εμπήναι	ἐμβῆναι
εβγήναι	ἐκβῆναι
επιδεαβήναι	ἀποδιαβῆναι
κοιμεθήναι	κοιμηθῆναι
χτυπεθήναι	κτυπηθῆναι
ευρεθήναι	εὑρεθῆναι
βρασήναι	βραχῆναι
ραήναι	ῥαγῆναι

3. Ancient <u>first aorist</u> infinitive suffix -αι has been replaced by <u>second aorist</u> suffix -ειν

PONTIC	ANCIENT
κράξειν	κράξαι
μεθύσειν	μεθύσαι

4. Attachment of the /e/ sound to the ancient aorist infinitive suffix –ειν
ράψεινε, κράξεινε, μεθύσεινε, καλέσεινε, λαλήσεινε, κτυπήσεινε, καθίσεινε

5. Same aorist suffix –κα (–κα was also the regular perfect suffix)

PONTIC	ANCIENT
εδώκα	ἔδωκα
ενδώκα	ἐνέδωκα
εποίκα	ἐποίηκα
εφήκα	ἀφῆκα
εθήκα	ἔθηκα

6. Ancient Greek –ein (-εῖν) infinitive > Pontic Greek –eane (-έανε) infinitive

PONTIC ANCIENT

ερθέανε ἐλθεῖν

See also

- Mariupolitan Greek
- Caucasus Greeks
- Cappadocian Greek

Notes

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External links

- Mark Janse, "Aspects of Pontic grammar (https://web.archive.org/web/20060225174417/http://www.benjamins.com/jbp/series/JGL/3/art/0008a.pdf)", a Review Article of Drettas (1997). The paper summarizes the high points of the book.
- Committee for Pontian Studies (Επιτροπή Ποντιακών Μελετών) (http://www.epm.gr/)
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